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# American Media Perspectives on Post-War Germany: The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, May 1 - June 30, 1949

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American Media Perspectives on Post-War Germany:

*The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*,

May 1-June 30, 1949

Ryan Edens

The summer of 1949 was a turning point for international politics. The increasingly hostile relationship between the United States and Russia was shifting from its uneasy alliance following the end of World War II to the point of a global power struggle. The Soviet Union and the Western powers of Britain, France, and the United States were struggling with what to do with Germany, the defeated foe of the war in Europe and the occupied territory of all four powers. This paper is an effort to study this struggle from an American perspective, using selections from two of the most prominent newspapers of both then and now, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Using editorials and opinion pieces, this paper will demonstrate the hopes, fears, criticisms, assessments, and opinions of these two newspapers and their correspondents to obtain a small look into the climate of public opinion that existed in America regarding Germany during this pivotal time.

In order to manage the breadth of material available from these sources, this paper will focus on a very specific time period, May and June of 1949. This period was selected because of the confluence of major events in the spring and summer of that year. It is fairly remarkable to note that so many things came to a head at such a crucial time for the development of Germany and for the ongoing diplomatic conflicts between the Big Four. The Berlin Blockade, an effort by Stalin to keep Western trade and transportation out of Berlin as a means of applying pressure to the West, was coming to a close. The Paris Council of Foreign Ministers, a conference of the Big Four powers, had been initiated by the Soviets, presumably to discuss the future of Germany and to seek an end to the division that had grown between the Western and Eastern zones. The Bonn Constitution, a supposedly transitional effort by the Western zones to form a Federal

Republic of Germany, was passing from the developmental stage to the point of ratification. The Soviets were planning a vote in the Eastern zone of Germany to approve of a seemingly Communist government that would advance a claim to unite and rule Germany as a whole.

All of these events were on the horizon the morning of May 1, 1949. By June 30, the conference was over, but many questions remained about the future of Germany. It is the effort of this paper not to answer these questions or to uncover some buried epiphany that would explain the resulting Cold War, but to find out what these questions were. It will study the changes in descriptive language, the trends in reaction to events, the subjects of comment and interest in the editorials, and the overall sentiments of the authors concerning the strategies and behaviors of the American, British, French, German, and Soviet officials.

The scope of this paper is thus a rather limited one, using *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* as my primary sources. It seems only natural that if one must narrow one's study to only two American newspapers, these two would be among the most appropriate. They were among the world's most respected and widely read newspapers in 1949 and they remain so today. While they are both based in New York, their perspectives are wide-ranging, but distinct from one another. Their voices are distinctly American and afford a great insight into the political debate that must have existed among the American people over the events of May and June, 1949.

The major analysis of this paper will be broken up into three sections. The first two sections will be detailed chronological analyses of the editorials. The first section will focus on *The New York Times* and the second will focus on *The Wall Street Journal*.

The third analytical section will take the analyses of the two newspapers and compare them in an attempt to determine not only where they agree or disagree subjectively, but also on what it is that each individually viewed as important enough for discussion.

The editorial sections of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* assessed the German question as a struggle between the newly unified Western allies of Britain, France, and America versus the Soviet Union. During the period of May and June, 1949, the tone, views, and coverage by these two newspapers changed from a cautious optimism for a unified Germany to a reasoned pessimism, skeptical that the Soviet Union and the West would reach a political or even an economic agreement in the near future. The views expressed in both newspapers have been broken up into two major eras: those from May 1 to May 22, before the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers, and those from May 23 to the end of June, as the meetings were held.

## ***The New York Times***

### **Before Paris (May 1-May 22)**

The articles included in this section were written in *The New York Times* in the aftermath of the Berlin Blockade, Stalin's effort to starve out the Western zones of the former capital of Germany. By May 12, the Western counter-blockade and a massive daily airlift that pumped supplies and support into Berlin from America, France, and Britain were enough to officially bring the blockade to an end and push Stalin into a position of negotiation. When Russia engaged in talks for a new Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris, optimism in the West at Russia's willingness to back off in Germany was coupled with a sense of hope that repairs in the relationship between the

Soviet Union and the Western powers would be possible. The term “Cold War” had already been coined, but its definition and the terms under which it would be fought were to be decided in the days to come.<sup>1</sup>

On May 1, two opinion pieces were published regarding the German situation. The first was a piece that attempted to place the upcoming Paris meeting in the context of the ongoing East/West conflicts over Germany, entitled “‘Hot-Cold’ Tactics.”<sup>2</sup> The second was a piece by James Reston that commented on the West’s views of Russia and how the United States would likely approach Paris. “Hot-Cold Tactics” develops a theory about Soviet foreign policy as one of aggression, or “hot tactics,” coupled by often unrelated conciliatory moves, or “cold tactics.” American officials saw this technique as a way for the Russians to constantly deflect attention from their sinister moves and motives by making moves meant to help their global reputation. In this first article, it is clear that American distrust for the Soviets is pervasive. In regard to the new German state, the larger prohibitive issue was always whether Germany would be oriented toward the West or toward Russia, because its resources, economy, and geographic location are too potentially important to both sides for Germany to remain neutral. The Russians were expected to propose a unified German government in Berlin and an immediate withdrawal of all occupation troops, based on a plan they proposed in Warsaw in 1948. The Americans had their own plan, a German constitution drawn up in Bonn that would unite the Western zones and supply a means of uniting the Eastern zones into the greater

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<sup>1</sup> Further discussion on Germany’s role in the Cold War can be found in several sources, including but not by any means limited to Fulbrook’s *Interpretations of the Two Germanies, 1945-1990* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: St. Martin’s, 2000), Hogan’s *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe* (New York: Cambridge, 1987), Kuklick’s *American Policy and the Division of Germany: The Clash with Russia over Reparations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1972), and Morgan’s *The United States and West Germany, 1945-1973: A Study in Alliance Politics* (London: Oxford, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, “Hot-Cold Tactics,” May 1, 1949, E1.

republic. Neither side at this point, however, was willing to submit to the other's plan. According to the piece, "There has been little indication that either the West or Russia has shifted fundamentally from the positions taken at the London conference seventeen months ago. Thus the outlook for agreement in the new Big Four meeting is not regarded as bright."<sup>3</sup>

Reston's piece has a similar tone of distrust and pessimism. The article asserts that the Russians' motives are clear. They want to appeal to a German aspiration for national unity, the Germans' desire for occupation forces to leave, and they want to prevent the Western German constitution from gaining legitimacy. Reston also touches on a reemerging concern that the Russians and Germans could eventually team up against the West: "The old fear is that, by pretending to be reasonable and promising the Germans power, political independence and freedom, the Russians might block the integration of Western Germany into Western Europe and eventually negotiate a Russo-German alliance as at Rapallo after World War I."<sup>4</sup> Reston asserts that this Russo-German alliance would be intolerable, because the Soviets must not be allowed to gain a foothold in Western Europe, and Western Europe needs Germany, or at the least West Germany, to stay within its sphere of influence. Reston views the Russians as instigators, willing to resort to whatever tactic best suits their goals of controlling Germany. He argues that Russia has sought to control Germany since the end of World War II, first by diplomacy, then by "force" in the form of the Berlin Blockade, and now since force has failed they are falling back on diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> Reston views the upcoming meeting as one in a series of several attempts to reach the same goals. To him, the Russians must be treated

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> James Reston, "U.S. Stays Skeptical in Negotiating With Russia," *NYT*, May 1, 1949, E3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

as adversaries, and the United States must be strong enough to counter whatever appeals the Soviets may make to Germans' sensibilities. Reston argues that despite the official face of optimism that Washington is trying to display, most officials are pessimistic about the possibility of a German resolution. They have consistently sought to build up the Soviet-controlled Eastern zone and tear away at the Western zones in order to assert domination over the whole of Germany. Reston warns, "Having failed to get us out of Germany by the application of force, they are, officials in Washington believe, seeking to negotiate us out of there by an interesting appeal to the German people."<sup>6</sup> Reston cautions that the Soviet Union's strategy is unknown at this point, but argues that it is likely to push for the "Warsaw plan" and use its appeal to the Germans as a counter to the Western constitutional proposal.<sup>7</sup> According to Reston, the Americans, British, and French were operating from an unparalleled position of strength following the end of the Berlin Blockade. The Bonn Constitution could serve as the tool by which Germany is united on Western terms, free of overt Soviet interference. Reston concludes, "In short, if an agreement is to be reached on the future of all of Germany, it must not this time be a mere paper agreement...the burden of proof in the Council of Foreign Ministers will be on those who broke the past agreements on Germany and used force in Berlin to try to achieve their ends."<sup>8</sup>

On May 2, "Optimism on Berlin" outlined the nearing conclusion of the Berlin Blockade and the opportunity this might bring to install a pro-Western unified German state. This editorial treats the upcoming meetings with an even hand, outlining what the West needed to accomplish to make the process successful and trying to come to grips

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



with what exactly the end of the Blockade meant. The optimism that is alluded to in the title was actually expressed by United Nations General Assembly President Evans about the likelihood of the Berlin Blockade coming to an end soon. The piece asserts that the U.S. must present a unified Western front to the Soviets. The Soviets, it is argued, are attempting to portray the matter as a conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, but it must be made clear that Britain and France are equal partners with America. Further caution is expressed that this does not signal an end to the Cold War, "but there is a chance that this struggle can be kept within bounds and perchance to the diplomatic level, and that Western unity and strength can not only hold Soviet expansion in check but can also produce...a balance of power between East and West...and preserve peace."<sup>9</sup> If Germany is viewed as the key to the struggle, the Paris meetings are the key to winning Germany. Again, reference to the "Warsaw plan" is relied upon to speculate on the goals and demands the Soviets may present in Paris. They will likely try to appeal to the German people and condemn the Western plan as a divisive one. This piece urges American officials to consider the appeal that Russia's plan had to the Germans because, though their opinion is not decisive, their "cooperation is necessary to make any Western program a success."<sup>10</sup>

Two more editorials on May 5 and May 6 reassert that the end of the Berlin Blockade does not mean the end of the Cold War. "Victory in Berlin" calls the Blockade "the most reckless and explosive adventure of Soviet imperialism—an adventure in which one false step by either side held the danger of war."<sup>11</sup> The end of the Blockade is hailed as a Western victory over the Soviets, but the fall of China to Communism is

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *NYT*, "Victory in Berlin," May 5, 1949, p 26.

called a huge setback. Western Europe is viewed as a success, and the piece even goes so far as to suggest the possibility that this signals a “decisive defeat,”<sup>12</sup> by far the most optimistic language used in describing the end of the Blockade. The May 6 editorial, “For a Positive Program,” describes the end of the Blockade as a relief. It also asserts that the Soviet Union is not willing to risk open war with a strong and unified West.<sup>13</sup> It is argued that the end of the Berlin Blockade demonstrates that the West must unify not only around “the program of consolidation, recovery, and defense as expressed in the European Recovery Program, the West-European Union, the Council of Europe, and the North Atlantic Treaty,”<sup>14</sup> but also around a political and economic solution that will win over the Germans and the rest of the free world. Again, the “Warsaw plan” is referenced as the basis of the Soviets’ probable program. In response to it, this piece stresses the importance of a Western program for political and economic development that can be presented in Paris. These two editorials attempt to shift the Cold War from the physical field of the Blockade to the new battleground of the negotiating table. Paris is viewed at this point as an opportunity to reach a settlement on Germany, but only if the West comes strong, prepared, and unified.

“New Chapter,” a piece that ran on May 8, furthers the view that Russia has been positioning to undermine the West German state. It restates the concern that the events in China bolstered the Soviet Union’s position globally, despite its losses in Western Europe. However, both hope and optimism are expressed in the piece. The Soviet Union is described as exceptionally image-conscious. The United States is said to believe that the Soviets tend to favor secret negotiations and less propaganda when they seriously

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *NYT*, “For a Positive Program,” May 6, 1949, p 24.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

want compromise. The negotiations leading up to the end of the Blockade “were conducted in the best tradition of secret diplomacy,”<sup>15</sup> leading to speculation that the Russians could be serious about compromise on the entire German situation. The article concedes, “Both sides agree that these Germans should live in a unified, democratic, demilitarized, denazified state.”<sup>16</sup> It is their disagreement, it is argued, over what this state should look like and how it should function that has the Big Four stalemated. The piece also contends that it was this very stalemate at the last meeting of the foreign ministers in London that led the Western powers to cooperate among themselves and consolidate their zones. This consolidation has starved the Soviet zone, arguably making cooperation with the West necessary for its survival. However, the piece still cautions against the Soviet Union’s motives, claiming that the Soviet Union will be motivated to block any Western state. Speculation over Russia’s willingness to bend on its Warsaw Plan is also expressed. The plan is described as a strong “peace offensive” that the Soviets have designed to appeal to the interests of the German people and undermine the legitimacy of the Western program. The West’s position is described as one of “wait and see.”<sup>17</sup> The perception here is that at worst the Soviets will re-impose the Blockade and at best they will compromise over the formation of a unified state, while reality will probably be somewhere in between.

The next time a relevant opinion piece was published in *The New York Times* was one week later, on May 15. This piece, called “The Test,” refers to the upcoming Paris meeting as a test of the progress that can be made regarding Germany between the Big

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<sup>15</sup> *NYT*, “New Chapter,” May 8, 1949, E1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Four powers.<sup>18</sup> Many of the same sentiments are voiced about the Soviet Union's desire to block the progress towards a Western German state. The piece makes specific reference to propaganda efforts within the Soviet press as well as efforts to block Western radio broadcasts in the Eastern zone. The West is again referred to as a collective unit, and the cooperation between Britain, France, and America toward passage of the Atlantic Pact and the perfection of the Western German state are discussed as top priorities. The main observation concerning the Russian strategy leading up to the meetings is again described as an effort to "consolidate their position in the Eastern occupation zone of Germany and [make] alluring overtures to the people in the German zones in the West."<sup>19</sup>

The piece then examines the current positions of both the East and the West. The Soviet Union is seen as wanting to set itself up as champion of a united Germany, turning the tables on the West and forcing compromise on a Western-influenced state. The Soviets are viewed as wary of this type of state because the entire balance of power in Europe would favor the West if Russia did not share in determining the German political structure. Interestingly, the possibility of the Russians being open to concessions is given a great deal of weight. The piece posits that the Russians might have three reasons for reaching a settlement over the German problem in Paris: détente in Europe would allow them to strengthen their gains in the Far East (China), easing anxiety over Russian intentions in Europe and the U.S. might stall the Atlantic Pact, and finally, Eastern Europe is in such economic disarray that reestablishing trade with the West might be a top priority for Stalin.<sup>20</sup> The West, according to this piece, is keeping its cards close to the vest because it is operating from an unparalleled position of strength with the Atlantic

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<sup>18</sup> *NYT*, "The Test," May 15, 1949, E1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Pact and the West German state under construction. According to the piece, the keys for the West's responses to the Soviets at the upcoming conference are to insist on the West German constitution as the basis for a united Germany and to withdraw troops to the ports as a compromise to the Soviet proposal of full withdrawal.<sup>21</sup> "The Test" is notable because it lays out the possibility for compromise on economic issues as a basis for political compromise.

That same day two more pieces were written regarding the Paris meeting, this time by Edwin L. James and Drew Middleton. Edwin L. James's piece discusses the possibility of extending the Marshall Plan, initiated in 1947, to the Eastern zone of Germany if unification is agreed upon.<sup>22</sup> Of course, this presupposed that Marshall Plan aid would continue to Western Germany even if no unification agreement was reached, but the piece raises an issue that could presumably be a hot topic of negotiation in Paris. Significantly, the piece treats the possibility of a unification agreement much more seriously and optimistically than pieces from the beginning of May. It also presupposes that unification of Germany will be the "big issue"<sup>23</sup> at Paris. James declares that the "Communists could not win a free election in their own zone" and they "have carried on a very bitter campaign against the Marshall Plan."<sup>24</sup> From James' perspective, the Russians view the Marshall Plan and the Western constitution as similar threats to their influence over Germany. Also, France is viewed as a possible opponent to the extension of aid to Germany, putting the issue up for debate. Finally, James alludes to a settlement

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Edwin L. James, "ERP for United Reich will be Issue at Paris," *NYT*, May 15, 1949, E3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

of the issue in a subsequent peace treaty, a definite sign that hope and consideration of a resolution was possible to observers at this time.

Middleton's piece concerns the role that the Germans themselves might have regarding the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting. The role of the German public in shifting the policies of both the West and East has been noted in earlier pieces, but Middleton's piece puts them front and center. The Germans are described as having some strength in their own internal affairs, especially in the Western zones or any proposed unification system that would allow free elections. Middleton says that they know their own position of importance to both sides and that their desire for unity will affect its possibility. He goes on to describe the political state of Germany. He notes that many anti-Communists are not necessarily "Western" democrats and that the West tends to favor a *Land* (state)-based system while the East tends to favor greater centralization. As James mentioned in his piece, Middleton sees the withdrawal of occupation troops and the continuation of Marshall Plan aid as keys to German public opinion. The appeal of each side to the German people is based mainly on these issues, and though the West's appeal is "less dramatic"<sup>25</sup> than that offered by the Soviets, Middleton believes that greater trust and reduced risk factors make the West's position a safer bet in the minds of the Germans.

"The West and Germany" was written on May 16 and comments on the initial meeting of the Western representatives in Paris before the official talks begin with the Soviet Union. This editorial defends the Western powers from accusations that they are "ganging up" on Russia and again asserts the heightened importance of the Paris meetings and the possibility of reconciliation. The Soviet plan for a unified Germany is

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

attacked as a “propagandistic guise designed to conceal its real purposes,”<sup>26</sup> although those purposes are not stipulated. The piece then goes on to plead for a unified Germany, but one that is inextricably tied to the West, because it can be “both the key to European recovery and a frontier of freedom.”<sup>27</sup>

On May 18, just days before the Council of Foreign Ministers conference was to convene, the results of a vote in the Eastern zone of Germany over the approval of a Soviet-sponsored unification plan were released. “A German ‘No’ to Russia” gives a scathing assessment of the apparent efforts of the Soviets to rig approval of their unification plan, accusing them of intimidation and counting faulty ballots. The editorial calls the German response (netting only 66% approval despite the reputation of similar votes in other Soviet satellite states netting results in the 90% range), a resounding rejection of not only the Soviet proposal but also the entire situation in the Russian-controlled Eastern zone. The Germans disapprove of the Soviet proposal “in bold contrast to [their] support freely accorded to the Western-inspired German Government and Constitution.”<sup>28</sup> The piece clearly uses the election results to conclude that the West is favored over the East by the German people, a clear deviation from the previous view that the Soviets had a strong appeal to the Germans.

The day before the Paris meetings were to begin, May 22, brought a dramatic increase in speculation on the opinion pages. “Big Four Again” outlines the background and positions of the Big Four as they enter the conference and assesses what it is perceived each side will try to accomplish. Again, the Marshall Plan is cited as the major success in preventing the spread of Communism westward. The piece views Russia with

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<sup>26</sup> *NYT*, “The West and Germany,” May 16, 1949, p 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *NYT*, “A German ‘No’ to Russia,” May 18, 1949, p 26.

“deep suspicion” in the upcoming meetings and believes that Russia wants a settlement to come out of Germany that will end the stalemate.<sup>29</sup> It also refers to the Western and Eastern zones as the “two Germanys,” implying that a prominent division has already occurred between the two, creating a need for reconciliation and that the West is in significantly better condition than the East. Three major concerns are listed as the most important to the negotiations: unification, the form of Germany’s future government, and the future of occupation troops. The Eastern zone’s recent election results are also assumed to be a prominent point of contention for both sides, with the Soviets contending that this is an indication of free voting in their zone and the West pointing out the relative disapproval of the German people for the Russian plan. The overall tone of the piece is one of hope, cautious optimism, and uncertainty.

Edwin L. James also wrote a piece on this pivotal day, commenting on the prospect of unification of the four German zones during the upcoming conference.<sup>30</sup> The overall tone of the piece is not very optimistic about unification any time soon, saying that any step in that direction would be significant and the product of extremely difficult negotiation. There is very little certainty in this piece about what the Soviets will propose at the meetings, as the prevailing wisdom still says that it will follow the old “Warsaw plan.” James points out that although meetings were called to discuss “‘the problems of Germany’...the United States officials are talking mainly of ‘the problem of Russia,’ and the Russians are talking primarily about the ‘problem of America,’ and if this leads to an agreement on ‘the problem’ of Germany, everybody around here will be slightly

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<sup>29</sup> *NYT*, “Big Four Again,” May 22, 1949, E1.

<sup>30</sup> *NYT*, “Unification of Germany is a Tough Proposition,” May 22, 1949, E3.



astonished.”<sup>31</sup> He also believes that both sides know that Germany cannot stand alone, outside the sphere of either the West or the East, as it would drift dangerously one way or the other if independent. James restates the opinion that the West will offer the Eastern zone inclusion in the Bonn Constitution and that the Soviets will reject it. He believes that the Russians must yield more to gain compromise because the West is in a strong enough position that it will not give up the progress it has made on its own with Germany. He also restates that the “No” vote given by the Eastern Germans is a sign of the minority nature of Communist support in Germany and that the Soviets will not permit a free elections that they are sure to lose. James then proposes that the real area of negotiation may not be political unification, but economic restoration. This is viewed as an area of possible progress that could lead to greater political integration because the Eastern zone is so badly in need of supplies from the West that the Soviets presumably have no choice but to work toward trade cooperation.<sup>32</sup> There is a sense of restrained hope in this piece that an economic solution could eventually glide into a political one.

James Reston also wrote a piece on May 22 about the United States’ position as one of concern toward both Germany and Russia equally.<sup>33</sup> He lists two prominent themes of America’s strategy in Europe: “the first and most prominent theme is that we are engaged in a battle with the Soviet Union for the soul of Germany...and the second theme is that the long-range threat to the peace of the world is still Germany, not Russia.”<sup>34</sup> Reston believes that the immediate Western concerns are to keep Russia from controlling the scientific skills of Germany and to continue as an occupying force in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> NYT, “US Guards Against Both Germany and Russia,” May 22, 1949, E3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Germany to keep the German people in check. The issue for Reston is agreeing on a single approach that will satisfy both goals. He describes Secretary of State Dean Acheson's approach as one that combines these two themes and is therefore plausible. This approach combines a plan for a Western-influenced state with limited but continued Allied intervention. Reston believes that the weakness in this plan is that continued occupation and involvement in government hurts its appeal to the German public. However, he ultimately believes that if continued occupation is the central problem, the German people will have to accept it and the status quo will have to survive as the safest plan.

Michael L. Hoffman also wrote a piece that day. His piece takes a broader look at Germany's economic standing and concludes that Germany is key to Europe's economic recovery and that political division is making economic recovery in Germany much harder than it otherwise would be.<sup>35</sup> Hoffman calls for a broad economic plan that will restore German trade with not only all of Western Europe but all of Eastern Europe as well. He believes that the problem is complex and will demand hard work on both sides, but that it is vital for the survival of both sides economically. He also sees the need for the United States to open up the German zones to freer trade because this is, in his view, the only way to lessen the subsidy burden of the Marshall Plan. Overall, Hoffman calls for political progress that will allow for greater economic ties between the East and West, a fact that both sides know they cannot ignore in Paris.<sup>36</sup>

One more editorial came on May 22. "A Program for Paris" is a final plea before the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings to the Western officials to stand strong against

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<sup>35</sup> Michael L. Hoffman. "German Economic Role is Big Issue," *NYT*, May 22, 1949, E5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

the Soviet Union and preserve the progress that has been made due to their recent cooperation.<sup>37</sup> Hope seems tempered in this piece, as the West is not expecting any permanent political solution in the upcoming meeting. Instead, because the West has limited its scope of aims to a provisional and transitional settlement, the piece urges the West not to bend on the Bonn Constitution or to let the Russians undermine their progress. The Atlantic Charter should be promoted and an independent Germany, with or without the Eastern zone, should be secured.<sup>38</sup> This piece again asserts that the Soviets' goal is control over all of Germany, but that this cannot happen. The West must move forward with its program for a Western government to secure its interests in Germany.

#### **Paris and Immediate Reactions (May 23-June 30)**

May 23, the official first day of the Paris conference, brought the first of several weeks of reaction to the closed-door negotiations between the Big Four powers. "Agenda for Paris" outlines exactly what is expected of both sides and what questions will be the center of discussion.<sup>39</sup> This piece mainly restates the major issues and problems of the meeting as it should play out. It is most notable in its refined list of the important points of contention between the two sides, however. The usual concerns of unification, government form, and troop withdrawal are mentioned, but so are border reforms, reparation equalization, and internal security. These issues all carry over from previous Big Four Council meetings. The piece attempts to place this meeting in the context of the ongoing negotiating process that extends all the way back to the end of World War II and through which little has been resolved.

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<sup>37</sup> *NYT*, "A Program for Paris," May 22, 1949, E8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *NYT*, "Agenda for Paris," May 23, 1949, p 22.

On May 26, the early news from Paris resulted in an editorial in complete shock at the new Russian proposal. The Russians, against all prior indication, proposed an Allied Four Power control council to oversee Germany, the Ruhr region, and Berlin. This seeming reversal of all of Russia's propaganda to this point was rejected completely by the Western powers and viewed in this piece as a flabbergasting reversion to a political stalemate with no immediate solution. The Russians are viewed as ignorant of their own relative bargaining weakness and accused of "wish[ing] to return to a chaotic Germany ruled by an Allied Control Council which they themselves declared abolished."<sup>40</sup> The reaction in this piece to the Russian proposal is one of confusion and animosity at the perceived Russian audacity making such a proposal. It is also one of complete surprise, as every prediction and indication by the West was that the Russians would have different goals than those made apparent so far.

May 29 brought the first comprehensive appraisal of the conference and it was decidedly one of disappointment. "Round 1 in Paris" takes stock of what little progress seems to have been made and judges that the prospect of a long-term settlement coming from this conference is very unlikely. There is also a real question about what the Soviet strategy is, as the West has presented its German plan while "[the Soviets'] manner has seemed almost as friendly and cordial as a salesman's."<sup>41</sup> The reaction in this piece is one of frustration that the only real agreement made so far has been the agenda, and that the Soviet Union seems to have no clear negotiating plan other than to reject whatever proposals the West makes. The piece states a belief that because the West has a plan for Germany and has presented it, the next move belongs to the Russians, although it is now

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<sup>40</sup> *NYT*, "The Russian Program," May 26, 1949, p 28.

<sup>41</sup> *NYT*, "Round 1 in Paris," May 29, 1949, E1.

even more uncertain if they will simply reject it wholesale or open the door for compromise.

Edwin L. James echoes the sentiment that the conference has started slowly and perplexingly in a piece that same day.<sup>42</sup> James sums up the West's views of Russia: "The Russians are not easy to understand."<sup>43</sup> He has no explanation and is certainly frustrated by the Soviets' proposal, largely because it is so far removed from the West's plans, but also because all previous predictions of the Soviet Union's likely appeal to the German sense of unity were so inexplicably wrong. He posits that the Soviet Union may have had an economic motive rather than a political one all along in calling for the conference. He is also very cynical toward Soviet Foreign Commissar Vishinsky's comments on "how well things are going in the Russian zone."<sup>44</sup> He sarcastically quotes Vishinsky as saying that "everything is simply wonderful" and questions his failure to explain why the Soviets were forced to end the Berlin Blockade if this were truly the case. Overall, James believes there are more questions now about what the Soviet Union is doing and what it wants than there were before the conference even started.

On May 30, an editorial called "The Western Program" ran that advanced the proposal by Britain, France, and America as fair and practical.<sup>45</sup> This piece again states the West's position and outlines the proposal for a Western-influenced Germany. It is described as positive and practical. Also, in answer to the Russians' assertion that the West is ignoring prior agreements for shared Four Power control of Germany, the piece defends that the proposal is based on the Potsdam agreement from July, 1945 and that the

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<sup>42</sup> *NYT*, "Big Four Bargaining is Off to Slow Start," May 29, 1949, E3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *NYT*, "The Western Program," May 30, 1949, p 12.

West is simply acting from a position of strength and cohesion. It is argued that it is the Russians' unwillingness to compromise or participate in open negotiations that has caused a Western group proposal.

The next day, a piece ran that attempted to explain the Russian strategy in Paris.<sup>46</sup> According to this piece, the Soviets have simply rejected every Western proposal with no room for compromise. Further, it is argued that they are acting hypocritically by approving an Eastern German constitution even as they promote a return to Four Power control. The rest of the piece comments negatively on the terms of this constitution, calling it "totalitarian," oppressive, and only nominally intended for all the German people, since they have made no moves to reunite the Western and Eastern zones. Overall, the Soviets are seen as only wanting to secure Communist influence in the government, and if they are unable to do so over all of Germany, they will do so in their Eastern zone.

By June 5, when the next piece about the Paris talks ran, a political settlement was all but discarded.<sup>47</sup> The focus at this point was on a shift to economic opportunities, although, according to the piece, "nothing is certain about a Foreign Ministers conference except debate...and translations."<sup>48</sup> The piece argues that both sides may have no choice but to shift focus to possible economic settlements, because the perceived pressures on both for increased East-West trade are so much greater than the arguments either may have against it. However, the piece does not express much optimism in more than an exploration of future possibilities to open trade because the conference is already two weeks old.

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<sup>46</sup> *NYT*, "The Soviet Answer," May 31, 1949, p 22.

<sup>47</sup> *NYT*, "Big Four Talk," June 5, 1949, E1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

That same day Edwin L. James wrote a piece that called the political stalemate of the Paris conference inevitable all along.<sup>49</sup> James believes that the major problem is the Russian insistence on veto power, especially since the West is now aligned so closely that the Russians will inevitably be pitted against the other three powers in all negotiations to come. The agenda at this point in the conference has been reduced to issues more likely to be settled, including Berlin, the recent Berlin railroad workers' strike, and the currency division. Again, James accuses the Russians of being inconsistent with their words and actions, because their public gestures and, as he calls it "propaganda," do not line up with their subsequent actions or proposals. Finally, James calls on Washington to approve the Atlantic Pact to prove the West's solidarity to Russia and to secure at least Western Germany within the West's sphere of influence.

Another week later, a piece appeared entitled "Showdown Near."<sup>50</sup> This piece updated the events of the conference and gave a rather grim assessment. The two sides are described as being deadlocked on virtually every issue, but especially on the issue of control of Berlin. Both sides are blamed in a sense, because it is the constant outright rejection of proposals and counter-proposals without any movement to compromise that has doomed the conference. However, the piece questions the motives of the Soviet Union to call the meeting at all, especially considering their firm stance since day one. The Soviet Union's recent appeal to the German people by proposing troop withdrawal was expected to fail even before the conference started and is seen as coming far too late to save face for the Russians. The piece also extends the argument that an economic

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<sup>49</sup> Edwin L. James, "Paris Parley Limits Scope of its Agenda," *NYT*, June 5, 1949, E3.

<sup>50</sup> *NYT*, "Showdown Near," June 12, 1949, E1.

settlement, in the form of increased trade and market coordination between the Western and Eastern zones, was the plan all along.

That same day, Edwin L. James followed up his piece from a week earlier.<sup>51</sup> This time, James asserts that the meetings are stuck and economic progress is the only slim possibility left for the Big Four. In the case of treaty talks, unity between all players is key, but the Soviet Union has a different agenda from the others, so agreement is unlikely. He also claims that the Soviet press is falsely describing the West as wanting a divided Germany. However, James finds a glimmer of hope in the end of a Berlin railway strike negotiated by the Big Four as a possible indication of economic cooperation. Overall, James believes the conference is stuck, and that “about the only good thing that can be said about it is that tempers have remained better than at other four-power meetings.”<sup>52</sup>

The next day brought another attempt to explain what exactly the Soviets were trying to do in Paris.<sup>53</sup> The Berlin Blockade was supposed to have ended weeks beforehand, but various delays had extended it indefinitely. This piece reacted strongly against the perceived stalling on the part of the Russians. They are accused of purposely prolonging the Blockade to exert pressure on the West at Paris. The piece argues that these “backhanded” strategies have actually backfired, causing the Western powers to unite despite their differences. The new Soviet plan is therefore meant to save face and split the West by redistributing power in a four-power system like that established just after World War II. The piece also explores the possibility that the Russians are seeking a “neutral” non-Western Germany rather than the Soviet Germany that had been assumed

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<sup>51</sup> Edwin L. James, “Time is Running Out at Paris Conference,” *NYT*, June 12, 1949, E3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *NYT*, “A New Soviet ‘Peace’ Plan,” June 13, 1949, p 18.



for so long. Finally, the West is called upon to supply an answer to the Soviet program that would result in a united Germany, not just a rejection that would ultimately prolong the division of the Eastern and Western zones.

On June 22, there is an editorial that attempts to sum up the events of the Paris conference.<sup>54</sup> This piece gives a final analysis of the meetings, and places most of the blame for its lack of progress on the Soviet Union. It describes global reaction as ranging from “deep skepticism to...faint hope.”<sup>55</sup> It accuses the Russians of negotiating through force and violence because of their precarious position in the face of Western unity. The stalemate between the two sides is viewed as extremely negative and dangerous, because it split Germany and Europe and increasingly entrenches the differences between the two that have prolonged the “Cold War.” There is certainly no end in sight for these tensions and the piece describes great resentment toward the Russians for their perceived unwillingness to compromise.

Finally, on June 30, the official announcement of the adoption of the West of the Bonn Constitution in their zones is examined.<sup>56</sup> The Basic Law which was signed into affect on the last day of the conference is described as a purely “transitional agreement” that will lead toward a more democratic Germany. This document gave reserved great interventionary powers to the American, British, and French governments and severely limited Germany’s military capability. Notably, it is argued that the Constitution “leaves West Germany a thinly disguised colony with only limited home rule,”<sup>57</sup> and that it

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<sup>54</sup> NYT, “The Lessons of Paris,” June 22, 1949, p 30.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> NYT, “A New Charter for Germany,” June 30, 1949, p 22.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

remains to be seen if the German people will accept the intervention of the Western powers on their affairs.

## ***The Wall Street Journal***

### **Before Paris (May 1-May22)**

*The Wall Street Journal*, just like *The New York Times*, dealt with the situation in Germany between May and June of 1949 in two distinct phases before and after the beginning of the Big Four Council of Foreign Ministers' conference. The opinions and reporting in this publication have an admittedly economic focus where *The New York Times* may have had more of a political one, but the interconnected nature of politics and economy make each inherently concerned with the other. In early May 1949, the adoption of the Atlantic Pact and the extension of the Marshall Plan were major issues that put the events of the Paris meetings in a specific context of negotiating the economic and political future of Germany and Europe as a whole.

On May 5, "The Gift of Time" was a reaction to this exact situation.<sup>58</sup> The piece criticizes the Truman administration for tying military aid to the Congressional resolution to adopt the Atlantic Pact, saying that the Pact is enough in itself to defend Western Europe. It is presumed that the Soviet Union would not attack a unified Western Europe now, if they ever would have, because they would not want to draw in the United States. The piece also says that the Soviets "are in retreat in Europe."<sup>59</sup> It is believed that because the Soviets have backed down in Berlin they will do so in all of Germany. Their supposed desire to withdraw occupation troops is cited as proof of this. Finally, the piece

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<sup>58</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, "The Gift of Time," May 5, 1949, p 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

urges the Truman Administration to allow free European economic recovery in the form of open German markets and free trade throughout Europe so that defenses can naturally build up without further burdening the American taxpayer through subsidies. The piece does not directly argue against Marshall Plan aid, but urges the United States to take steps to lessen Europe's dependence on that aid.

That same day, Joseph E. Evans wrote a piece that assessed the Soviet Union's position in regard to Germany as one of last resort.<sup>60</sup> Evans argues that because the Soviet Union knows this meeting will be its last chance to influence West German politics or economics, the Russians may offer some surprising concessions. He believes that they must block the Western German state because it would freeze them out of that region of Germany. He reasons that they will use the "Warsaw plan" as a counter-option, and says, "It is difficult to reason what sugar-coating they could put on the Warsaw proposals to make them palatable to western tongues."<sup>61</sup> Despite the Soviet Union's desperate situation, Evans is not confident of a settlement, based on the Soviets' history of duplicitousness at previous meetings. However, he also posits that the Soviets may be in favor of "a Western-sponsored [unified] state in which almost half of Germany would be represented by Communists."<sup>62</sup> Such a state would be a decided problem for the Western powers, leading Evans to question Soviet motives, whether their actions were stubborn or conciliatory.

The next appeal on the editorial page came on May 9.<sup>63</sup> "The Lowered Guard" asserts that the Soviet Union has let its guard down in regard to Western Europe by

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<sup>60</sup> Joseph E. Evans, "The Last Chance," *WSJ*, May 5, 1949, p 6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *WSJ*, "The Lowered Guard," May 9, 1949, p 4.

ending the Berlin Blockade and calling on this new conference, and that the West and the United States must take advantage of this in Paris. The piece criticizes the U.S. State Department, above all, for being unprepared by the “conciliatory” move by the Soviets in ending the Berlin Blockade. The Americans have become so accustomed to an aggressive Russia, it is argued, that a seemingly peaceful one has left the Administration confused. The piece blames the Russians for dividing Germany and for “world Communism,” but also blames the American government for only preparing for a divided Europe and not for the apparent shift in focus to a united Germany and a possibly more integrated Europe.<sup>64</sup> It also urges the development of a peace plan that will rival the Soviets’ plan, because it has inflated their popularity among the Germans, even at the risk “that all Germany may be communized if the country is united.”<sup>65</sup> Finally, the piece urges a trade plan that will integrate the East-West economies in order to avoid pushing the Soviet Union to the point of aggressive action and to lessen the strain on the Marshall Plan.

The next day an editorial ran that assessed the Bonn Constitution as a first step to German unity that is limited in its design to Western Germany.<sup>66</sup> The piece asserts that the Constitution was not intended to be a bargaining chip in Paris and only appeals to the German people because of last-minute American intervention. The piece asserts that any road toward German unity would significantly change the Constitution to make it palatable to the Soviets. The piece criticizes Western policy for too quickly abandoning the possibility of a united Germany and accepting this divided state. The effort to produce the Constitution is praised, however, as a move to stand up to the Soviets and to

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> *WSJ*, “The Right Track,” May 10, 1949, p 6.

force them into cooperation. In fact, the Constitution is a negotiating weapon, even if not initially intended as such, that proves “that once you get on the right track you may make mistakes but the odds are in your favor.”<sup>67</sup>

On May 12, an editorial marked the official end of the Berlin Blockade by attempting to explain its failure.<sup>68</sup> “Keeping the Record Straight” places the responsibility for the Blockade’s end not with a successful policy initiative by the Truman Administration but instead with the failure of the Russians themselves. The Russians, it is believed, recognized the futility of a struggle with the West and wanted a political and economic settlement that would benefit both sides. The Soviets’ policy is described as being based on “intransigence, unilateralism, and the sealing off of their zone...[but] it hurt their prestige, and the counter-blockade it evoked hurt the economy of the Soviet zone to the point of strangulation.”<sup>69</sup> The piece states that this is why the Soviets requested a four-power meeting in conjunction with the end of the Blockade. The credit for the Blockade’s end is given to General Clay, the governor of the American zone in Germany. It is not due to the foreign policy goals of the Administration, including the Atlantic Pact. The piece clearly criticizes the policy of the United States, but acknowledges the significant gains and the potential for progress that exists in Germany.

That same day, William Henry Chamberlain wrote a piece that assessed the positions of the East and West as the Paris conference approached.<sup>70</sup> He believes that

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> *WSJ*, “Keeping the Record Straight,” May 12, 1949, p 4.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> William Henry Chamberlain, “Between East and West,” *WSJ*, May 12, 1949, p 4.

Germany is “far and away the most important prize in the East-West struggle.”<sup>71</sup> The lifting of the Berlin Blockade is not a relaxation of the struggle, Chamberlain asserts, but a shift in strategy by the Russians toward a diplomatic front that acknowledges the importance of winning the German people. He argues that the Russian tactics of pillaging and intimidation have failed to secure Soviet interests in Germany. Instead, the Soviets have turned to a new method of persuasion by appealing to the German desire for unity. Chamberlain believes the West must respond to this diplomatic challenge by accepting the possibility of German unity. Western leaders can do this by extending the principles of the Bonn Constitution which are currently limited in form to the Western zones to all of Germany. Finally, he believes that the German economy should not be interfered with by alien regulations, because free trade is essential to Germany’s and Europe’s economic recovery.

On May 20, the American Military Governor General Lucius Clay retired from his German post. Joseph E. Evans wrote a piece that characterized this as a symbolic shift from military occupation to civilian control that would ultimately extend to the new German state.<sup>72</sup> He commends the Americans for their recovery efforts in Germany, acknowledging that they brought food and rebuilt a working economy to the Western regions. However, they did not and, in Evans’ estimation probably could not, bring democracy. He writes, “That is one thing which cannot be imposed from without, least of all in an atmosphere of martial law.”<sup>73</sup> He believes that the West’s attempts to bring democracy to the region were misplaced because it existed in form but not in substance. The conditions that Germans lived with were not democratic under the occupation

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Joseph E. Evans. “End of an Era,” *WSJ*, May 20, 1949, p 6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

control, so attempts to characterize it as such were largely hypocritical and gave democracy a bad name among ordinary Germans who could not distinguish it from autocratic rule. Evans believes that as the German people regain control of their own affairs, resentment towards American “democracy” will wane. He argues that civilian German control, then, is key to establishing good relations between Germany and the West.

### **Paris and Immediate Reactions (May 23-June 30)**

On May 23 the Big Four Council of Foreign Ministers meetings began. The next day, William Henry Chamberlain assessed the United States’ position in Paris and called for a firm stance toward the Soviets.<sup>74</sup> Chamberlain believes that the conference comes at a favorable time for the United States as the Berlin Blockade and the Bonn Constitution provide more leverage for the West than in past conferences. He cites several lessons that should be heeded from those past conferences. He believes that concessions made to the Soviets at Tehran in 1943 and Yalta in 1945 by Roosevelt played into Stalin’s hands and made the Soviets believe they could push the West into appeasement. He also cautions that they may try to appeal to German nationalism in an attempt to split the Western coalition by feeding French fears of a strong Germany. He declares the new Soviet diplomatic strategy to be “subversive and torturous.”<sup>75</sup>

Two days later, Chamberlain wrote again about the German situation, but this time he focused on how the economic situation might affect the political maneuvers in

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<sup>74</sup> William Henry Chamberlain. “Soviet Contact Resumed,” *WSJ*, May 24, 1949, p 6.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

Paris.<sup>76</sup> He argues that despite the political successes in organizing a Western German state, any such state would be expensive and demanding economically to the American taxpayers by way of subsidies and aid. He believes that because West Germany would depend so heavily on commercial trade in manufactured goods, it would be difficult to wean it off of Marshall Plan aid and American subsidy. He calls this a political issue because increased economic and trade integration between the Eastern and Western zones would make self-sufficiency much easier, but the obvious obstacles between political unity mean that economic cooperation will be very dependent on the events of the Paris meetings. Chamberlain says, though, that the vital question is whether trusting Germany with a level of economic dependence on the Soviet world might not suck them into the Soviet sphere of political influence. He believes the West must decide whether “they will admit Germany on equal terms to their markets or whether they will sanction resumption of Germany’s old commercial ties with the East.”<sup>77</sup> He does not, however, provide a clear answer to that question.

By June 6, realizations that negotiations were not going to result in German political unification begged the question of what good, if any, was going to come from the conference at all. Joseph E. Evans wrote a piece that refuted Russia’s claim to war reparations and made a pessimistic assessment of the possibility of any political or economic settlement resulting from Paris.<sup>78</sup> Evans believes that any such reparations, stemming from an act of appeasement by Franklin Roosevelt in Yalta after World War II ended, would ultimately only come from American pockets, and that this is unacceptable. Building on this, he gives an overall negative summary of the negotiations. He claims

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<sup>76</sup> William Henry Chamberlain. “Trade vs. Politics,” *WSJ*, May 26, 1949, p 6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Joseph E. Evans, “Russia’s Reparations,” *WSJ*, June 6, 1949, p 4.



that Russia has “lost no time in dashing ice water” on the hopes in some Western circles that “this time the Russians really meant to achieve a German settlement.”<sup>79</sup> He goes on to dismiss the possibility of reparations because the Soviet Union had already stripped its zone of resources and economic potential. He refers to the possibility of an economic unification agreement as a “miracle” and says that such an agreement would itself saddle the Western zones with the deficit burden of the Soviet zone. He believes that the West’s rejection of the reparation claim is not a solution, because the Soviets will never abandon the claim even as they continue to strip their own zone. Finally, Evans argues that because the Soviets did not come to Paris “with the serious intention of achieving an overall German settlement,”<sup>80</sup> one will not happen until an agreement is made on the issue of reparations.

On June 14, William Henry Chamberlain wrote a piece about the old fear of a Russo-German Alliance.<sup>81</sup> He asserts that rumors of such an alliance are unfounded based on the Soviet Union’s behavior at Paris. If the Soviets were trying to court the German people, they would have gone through with the proposal for a central unified state, which they did not. Chamberlain believes that an alliance between the two would depend on a return of East Prussian lands that have since become part of Poland, a situation he contends will not happen. Most importantly, he believes that alliances depend on equal partners, a condition “that emphatically [does] not exist today.”<sup>82</sup> Germany is far too weak and its Eastern zone has been exploited too much by the Russians, according to Chamberlain, for the two to even want to work together. Finally,

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> William Henry Chamberlain. “Soviet-German Alliance,” *WSJ*, June 14, 1949, p 6.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

he judges that the Germans are actually far more friendly to the West because of their gentler treatment at the hands of Western occupation forces since the war, making fears of an alliance unfounded.

The final two opinion pieces regarding the German situation were written by Joseph E. Evans on June 22 and 29. The first is an assessment of the Soviets' strategy in and before Paris.<sup>83</sup> He claims here that the Soviet Union missed a prime economic opportunity by focusing too much on propaganda and maintaining a certain global image. He dubs Paris a failure, ending in a "whimper," and calls the Soviets "just stupid."<sup>84</sup> He concedes, however, that the West did not provide many fresh ideas, either, focusing more on reactive moves countering what the Soviets advanced. Evans says that hope in a German resolution was dashed early into the negotiations and proved to be overly optimistic. Instead of discussing a settlement, the Soviets apparently called the conference simply to reestablish contact with the West. Evans believes this may have been a way of "stretching a peaceful hand" to the West by way of propaganda. Looking back, he sees their behavior as a stalling tactic to lessen the effectiveness of the Atlantic Pact and the Marshall Plan, a move that fits into prior Soviet techniques. Above all, though, Evans still does not believe this explains why they ignored the economic opportunity to increase East-West trade that the Eastern zone clearly needs, especially since the West would have facilitated such an agreement. After all, a stable Western Germany also would need that trade. Evans calls the Soviet Union devious, but ultimately Soviet diplomats just acted blindly, mistakenly divorcing economic and political issues.

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<sup>83</sup> Joseph E. Evans, "The Soviets Nod," *WSJ*, June 22, 1949, p 6.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

The second piece assesses the United States' policies immediately after the Paris conference ended.<sup>85</sup> Evans is critical of America's foreign policy, stating that it is not taking advantage of the West's favorable position in Europe. He sees the Soviet Union as stumbling in a lulled sense of panic with a desire for some form of conciliation. Instead, Evans believes the United States is acting to promote the Cold War through division instead of seizing the opportunity to mend fences with the Soviets. He does not see the Soviets as pursuing a "hot war" in Europe. Instead, the United States is focusing on its military might and economic sanctions to stave off a Soviet attack, which in turn is seen by the Russians as Western belligerence. Evans urges the United States to abandon the idea of a European armed camp that can withstand Soviet aggression and focus on building economic strength in all of Europe instead. He argues vehemently for free trade between the East and West to lessen political tensions and create an atmosphere of mutual dependence, if not mutual respect.

## Conclusions

*The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* are American newspapers. They approach foreign policy from distinctively American perspectives and write for mainly an American audience. The opinions expressed in each reflect that in countless ways, but their differences in the treatment of this particular issue during this time period are also evident. In many ways, they said the same things about the Paris conference, even when they were speculating wrongly, but in just as many ways they focused on completely different aspects of the same events.

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<sup>85</sup> Joseph E. Evans, "After Paris," *WSJ*, June, 29, 1949, p 4.

Several notable points were presupposed by both newspapers. The conference was divided between the West and the Soviet Union, making it a two-sided affair. Germany was going to be the main issue for both sides. The Soviets were approaching the conference with a desire to negotiate for political or economic settlement(although the level of such negotiation was subject to debate). The West was united and strong like never before based on its plan for a Western German state and its success in ending the Berlin Blockade. The Soviets were going to try to appeal to the German people and promote themselves as the leaders of German unity. Most importantly, both the Soviets and the West desired to maintain influence over Germany, whether in part or in whole, and neither would tolerate a united Germany dominated by the other, nor a neutral Germany balancing between the powers.

Both newspapers regard the Soviet Union as a clear adversary to the West. There is no question but that, at this point in time, the Russians were distrusted and their motives were barely if ever understood by either newspaper. The "Warsaw plan" was cited in several opinion pieces in both newspapers leading up to the conference as the most likely basis for Russia's counter-proposal to the Bonn Constitution. Russia was said to be trying to appeal to German nationalism and attempting to promote itself as the champion of German unity versus the West's promotion of division. Many of the recommendations made by both newspapers about the course of action for the West in Paris were made based on this theory. However, all predictions concerning this strategy were proven mistaken once the meetings began. Authors in both newspapers were shocked by the Soviet proposals. They abandoned their preconceived notions of what the Soviets would bring to the negotiating table with surprise and, in some cases, indignation.

The authors had predicted a climate of negotiation towards political or economic settlement, but in reality the Soviets likely called the conference only to reopen diplomatic channels with the West and lay the framework for future negotiations. Their ultimate motives may never be fully understood, but the Soviet proposals in Paris certainly did not reflect the predictions made by the authors in either newspaper leading up to the conference.

The Soviets are repeatedly criticized for an unwillingness to compromise with the Bonn Constitution. However, the West rejected every proposal made by the Soviets, as well, but was encouraged to stand firm and united against the Russians. A dominant theme throughout both publications is this concept of Western unity against the threat of the Soviet Union. The West was provoked by the Berlin Blockade, resulting in coordination and unity against the Soviets. Strength is viewed as a proper goal for the West while diplomatic compromise and negotiation are demanded of the Soviets.

Interestingly, Stalin himself is rarely if ever singled out in either paper. Despite his position as leader of the Soviet Union, Stalin is mentioned mainly in reference to past negotiations rather than those in Paris. The Soviet delegate at the Paris meetings was Andrei Vishinsky. He is singled out far more than Stalin, presumably because he is seen as Stalin's mouthpiece at the conference. However, little can be assessed about how the authors viewed Stalin directly because they rarely refer to him. Instead, the authors more often speak of the Russians collectively and the government as an entity rather than a personified figure.

As has been discussed, there is a marked difference in both newspapers between their focus before and after the meetings started. The main difference is between hope

and reality. Before the meetings actually start, even the most pessimistic of opinions is qualified with an acknowledgement that anything could happen. Hope is expressed that some level of settlement might be reached, even though that level or its ultimate probability are different in virtually every piece. Even once the conference began and it became clear that the Soviets were not there to submit to the Bonn Constitution or even to amend it, hope was held out that an economic solution might be reached. Both newspapers had several pieces that focused on the possibility, even the joint necessity, of an increase in trade between the two sides.

Despite their common themes, many important differences separate how each newspaper viewed the events of this period. *The New York Times*, for instance, consistently referred to the West as a collective unit and stressed the importance of a united front against the Soviets. *The Wall Street Journal*, however, spoke mainly to and about the American government, specifically the State Department and the Truman Administration. Criticisms made in *The New York Times* refer to adjustments and strategies that all of Western Europe and the United States must make, while *The Wall Street Journal* clearly criticizes the State Department at several points, and treats the conference more as a meeting of the United States and Russia than of Britain, France, America, and Russia. This is most evident in how each discusses the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Pact. *The New York Times* is highly praiseful of both and even characterizes the Marshall Plan as saving Western Europe from Communism, while *The Wall Street Journal* views each as more of a domestic political issue, focusing on how their respective applications affect American taxpayers and what benefit they have to American interests in Europe.

Each newspaper covers both economic and political perspectives, but *The Wall Street Journal* is especially concerned with free trade and economic aspects that affect every issue. *The New York Times* tends to view things with more of a global perspective, but this difference is largely reflective of the nature of each newspaper. While it is to be expected, it must be noted because it does color the arguments made in their respective editorial pages.

Through the pages of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, one can get a brief glimpse into the American debate over the question of Germany's future in May and June of 1949. The impasse reached at the Big Four Council of Foreign Ministers conference in Paris was precipitated by the events in Berlin, Bonn, and all of Europe that led up to it. Perhaps the unwillingness of either side to work with the other should have been evident, but the possibility of a settlement and the restoration of a united Germany left both newspapers expressing hope that progress could be made in Paris. That little or nothing would be accomplished was feared and even expected in some ways, but the impact the conference left is unmistakable. West and East Germany remained divided for forty years. The Cold War dragged on as both sides became entrenched in their own sphere of influence. Most importantly, and most evident in these two newspapers, the Paris conference confirmed the one thing that divided the world for so long: neither side trusted or fully understood the other, and it clouded every move and counter-move they made.

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